

THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A password generation and verification system, comprising:

element group storage means for storing a plurality of element groups that are pre-selected from a plurality of different categories, wherein each element group belongs to a selected category and includes a plurality of password elements input by a user that belong to the selected category;

scramble element storage means for pre-storing a plurality of scramble elements;

category sampling means for randomly sampling a predetermined number of specific categories from said selected category;

mixed element group generating means for mixing a sampled password element that is randomly sampled from the plurality of password elements stored in said element group belonging to said specific categories with a predetermined plurality of sampled scramble elements, different than said sampled password element, that are randomly sampled from the plurality of scramble elements stored in said scramble element storage means and belonging to the same category as said sampled password element to generate a mixed element group for each specific category, each mixed element group arranging said sampled password element and said sampled scramble elements in random order;

display means for displaying said mixed element group including only said sampled password element and said sampled scramble elements;

selecting means for selecting, from said mixed element group displayed by said display means, a selected password element for each specific category; and

verifying means for verifying said selected password element to said sampled password element for each specific category[.]; and

authentication means for providing authentication when
all of said selected password elements match said sampled
password elements.

2. (Original) A password generation and verification system according to claim 1, wherein said element group is stored, with said password element associated with said specific category, in said element group storage means.

3. (Original) A password generation and verification system according to claim 1, wherein said password element includes image information.

4. (Original) A password generation and verification system according to claim 1, wherein said mixed element group generating means is coupled via a telecommunication line to said display means and said selecting means.

5. (Original) A password generation and verification system according to claim 4, wherein said telecommunication line includes lines for utilizing a fixed telephone, cellular telephone, and the Internet.

6. (canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A method for verifying a password, comprising the steps of:

randomly specifying, from a plurality of element groups that belong to a category that is pre-selected from a plurality of different categories, a predetermined number of said element groups, wherein each element group includes a plurality of password elements that belong to the category;

mixing a sampled password element that is randomly sampled from one of said specified element groups with sampled scramble elements, different than said sampled password element, that belong to the same category as said sampled password element to generate a mixed element group for each specified element group, where said sampled password element and said sampled scramble element are arranged in random order;

displaying said mixed element group including only said sampled password element and said sampled scramble elements;

selecting, from said displayed element group, a selected password element for each mixed element group; and

verifying[[],] said selected password element to said sampled password element for each category[.]; and

providing authentication when all of said selected password elements match said sampled password elements.

8. (Original) A method for verifying a password according to claim 7, wherein said step of generating further comprising the step of sending said mixed element group onto a display device that is electrically coupled via a telecommunication line for utilizing a fixed telephone, cellular telephone, and the Internet, and receiving said selected password element via said telecommunication line.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) A password generation and verification system according to claim 1, wherein said selected password element is not verified to said sampled password element when said selected password element is not selected within a predetermined time.

11. (Previously Presented) A method for verifying a password according to claim 7, wherein said step of verifying said selected password element to said sampled password element is denied when said selected password element is not selected within a predetermined time.